

abusing Euripides as 'a mutilated monkey',
and Ibsen as
'a Fracastoro¹ of the drama'.

There is no need to multiply examples.
One would
think there were warnings enough for any
modern critic
with the slightest knowledge of his
predecessors, against
undue dogmatism. Do they suppose
themselves gifted
with more wisdom than Johnson, or more
genius than
Coleridge? The only conclusion, I should
have thought,
must be a resolute scepticism about all
judgements not
confirmed by long experience. That would
not prevent
one *feeling* vigorous Hkes and dislikes of
one's own as
strongly as ever; but to *think* that one can
impose diem
as valid matters of fact on other people!
And yet living

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critics continue to utter their general
statements about
literature and their judgements on
individuals with the
same complete self-assurance as of old.
'Poetry is rhythm
in touch with the Absolute'; 'Poetry is love
speaking
musically'; 'Art demands a bleak and
uncompromising
daylight for its operations' ('Kubla Khan', for
example?);
'That it may survive, poetry must be
anonymous; it
must be strictly, religiously impersonal'
(like Catullus,
or Villon, or Byron?); 'Nothing rational is
beautiful' (a
view certainly prevalent among modern
poets)—there is
no need to multiply quotations. Our weekly
and monthly
periodicals hum with such oracles. Any one,
with a litde

practice, could turn them out by the
hundred. The com-
placent attitude to Art of such literary
censors always
reminds me of Flaubert's description of
bourgeois at the
sea-side: 'des "m6sieurs" a lunettes d'or,
lisant le journal,
et de temps f autre, entre deux lignes,
savourant l'immens-
ite avec un air d'approbation'. It is, indeed,
just the sort
of criticism to be written for, or by,
Bouvard and

Fracastoro, the sixteeadi-century author of a poem
called *Syphilis*.